

Message Text

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TO USMISSION GENEVA

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SUBJECT: KANSAS CITY STAR REQUESTS RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS
ON VIETNAM PEACE TREATY

FOR MEPC DEL AMBASSADOR BUNKER FROM STOREY

1. THE KANSAS CITY STAR INTENDS TO PUBLISH A COMPREHENSIVE ARTICLE ON THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE VIETNAM PEACE ON JANUARY 27. THEY HAVE POSED THE FOLLOWING SIX QUESTIONS TO A NUMBER OF SENIOR US GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS WHO WERE INVOLVED AND THEY HAVE ASKED IF YOU WOULD RESPOND AS WELL. I HAVE PREPARED POSSIBLE DRAFT RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONS MOSTLY DRAWN FROM YOUR PREPARED SPEECH MATERIAL WHICH MAY ASSIST. THESE HAVE BEEN CLEARED WITH EA/VN.

QUESTION ONE: HAS THIS YEAR BROUGHT ABOUT WHAT YOU EXPECTED IN VIETNAM OR DID YOU EXPECT THE PEACE TO WORK OUT BETTER THAN IT HAS?

SUGGESTED DRAFT RESPONSE: I DON'T BELIEVE ANYONE INVOLVED IN ARRANGING THE PEACE TREATY IN VIETNAM ACTUALLY THOUGHT THERE WOULD BE AN IMMEDIATE AND ABSOLUTE CESSATION OF WARFARE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. ON ONE HAND, IF A TOTAL CEASE-FIRE HAD OCCURRED DURING THE YEAR WE, OF COURSE, WOULD

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HAVE BEEN DELIGHTED; HOWEVER ANY REDUCTION IN VIOLENCE, ANY

STEP TOWARD OUT ULTIMATE GOAL OF PEACE IS CERTAINLY A BETTER SITUATION THAN THAT WHICH PREVAILED ON JANUARY 28, 1973. THAT THE APPARATUS DEVELOPED TO BRING ABOUT THE PEACE IS STILL IN PLACE, IS STILL BEING UTILIZED BY THE BELLIGERENTS AND IS STILL FUNCTIONING I BELIEVE IS A HOPEFUL SIGN AND A SOUND REASON TO RETAIN SOME DEGREE OF OPTIMISM.

QUESTION TWO: WHY DO YOU THINK THE PARIS AGREEMENT FAILED TO BRING PEACE IN VIETNAM?

SUGGESTED DRAFT RESPONSE: BY ANY REASONABLE MEASURE, THE SITUATION IS BETTER TODAY THAN BEFORE THE JANUARY 27 AGREEMENT. OUR PRISONERS ARE HOME; OUR FORCES ARE DIS-ENGAGED.

ON THE OTHER HAND, THE WAR'S FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE REMAINS UN-RESOLVED: NORTH VIETNAM IS STILL DETERMINED TO GAIN POLITICAL POWER IN SOUTH VIETNAM, BY FORCE IF NECESSARY; THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT AND THE GREAT MAJORITY OF THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE PEOPLE ARE STILL DETERMINED TO PREVENT THIS. CONSEQUENTLY, THE CLIMATE OF MUTUAL TRUST AND GOODWILL NECESSARY TO BRING ABOUT NATIONAL RECONCILIATION DOES NOT YET EXIST.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT HAS BEEN UNSATISFACTORY BECAUSE:

--CEASEFIRE VIOLATIONS ARE NUMEROUS, AND THEY HAVE BECOME MORE SERIOUS IN RECENT MONTHS.

--COMMUNIST OBSTRUCTIONISM HAS PREVENTED CEASEFIRE SUPERVISORY BODIES FROM FUNCTIONING EFFECTIVELY.

--THERE HAS BEEN NO PROGRESS TOWARD A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT BETWEEN THE VIETNAMESE PARTIES.

--THE COMMUNISTS HAVE NOT COOPERATED IN RESOLVING THE STATUS OF OUR MEN MISSING IN ACTION.

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HOWEVER, I BELIEVE IT IS STILL TOO EARLY TO CATEGORICALLY ADMIT THAT THE PARIS AGREEMENT HAS FAILED TO BRING ABOUT PEACE IN VIETNAM. GRANTED VIOLENCE CONTINUES, BUT AT A MUCH LOWER RATE THAN IN THE PAST. YET IMPERFECT THOUGH THE SITUATION IS, IT IS FAR BETTER THAN BEFORE THE PARIS AGREEMENTS WERE SIGNED -- AND HOPEFULLY WE MAY HAVE ENTERED A NEW ENVIRONMENT, ONE IN WHICH WE CAN LOOK AHEAD TO PLAN FOR ADVANCING OUR COMMON STAKE IN THE PEACE,

STABILITY AND IMPROVEMENT OF LIFE FOR THE PEOPLES OF ASIA.

A SYMBOL OF THIS NEW ENVIRONMENT WAS THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON VIETNAM HELD IN PARIS AT THE END OF FEBRUARY 1973. SIX COMMUNIST AND SIX NON-COMMUNIST FOREIGN MINISTERS INCLUDING THE SOVIET UNION AND CHINA, WHO HAD NOT SAT TOGETHER AT AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE TABLE IN YEARS, CONVENED A MEETING ON THE MOST CONTROVERSIAL SUBJECT OF THE PAST DECADE AND FOUND THEMSELVES ABLE TO SIGN A DOCUMENT WHICH ENDORSED THE JANUARY 27 PARIS AGREEMENT AND WHICH HOPEFULLY WILL GUARANTEE PEACE IN INDOCHINA.

QUESTIONS THREE AND FOUR: IN THE GENERAL STRATEGIC SITUATION DO YOU FEEL THAT THE TWO VIETNAMESE SIDES ARE ABOUT THE SAME BALANCE TODAY AS WHEN THE AGREEMENT WAS SIGNED, IN TERMS OF STRENGTH OF FORCES IN THE FIELD AND TERRITORIAL CONTROL? IF YOU BELIEVE THE BALANCE HAS SHIFTED, IN WHAT WAY AND FOR WHAT REASONS HAS THE SHIFT OCCURRED?

SUGGESTED DRAFT RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS THREE AND FOUR: THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT CONTROLS OVER 80 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION AND ALMOST ALL OF THE ECONOMICALLY PRODUCTIVE TERRITORY OF VIETNAM, WHILE THE COMMUNISTS CONTROL LESS THAN TEN PERCENT OF THE POPULATION, MOSTLY IN REMOTE AND ECONOMICALLY MARGINAL AREAS. EXCEPT FOR SOME GOVERNMENT SUCCESSES IN RECOVERING A NUMBER OF HAMLETS LOST DURING THE COMMUNISTS' LAND-GRAB OFFENSIVE AT THE TIME THE CEASE-FIRE WAS SUPPOSED TO GO INTO EFFECT, THIS SITUATION HAS NOT CHANGED SIGNIFICANTLY DURING THE PAST YEAR.

WITH REGARD TO CONVENTIONAL MILITARY FORCES, HOWEVER, THE NORTH VIETNAMESE HAVE CONTINUED TO INFILTRATE MEN AND

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MATERIEL INTO THE SOUTH. BECAUSE OF THIS INFILTRATION, THE COMMUNISTS NOW HAVE ABOUT 190,000 COMBAT TROOPS IN THE SOUTH (ALL BUT 30,000 OF THEM NORTH VIETNAMESE). THIS IS 40,000 MORE THAN THEY HAD IN JANUARY 1973. THEY HAVE ALSO INCREASED SUBSTANTIALLY THE NUMBER OF TANKS AND ARTILLERY PIECES IN THE SOUTH. THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAS NOT INCREASED ITS MILITARY FORCE STRUCTURE. ALSO, AMERICAN MILITARY SUPPLIES HAVE BEEN PROVIDED ONLY ON A ONE-FOR-ONE REPLACEMENT BASIS, AS STIPULATED IN THE PARIS AGREEMENT. CONSEQUENTLY, THE COMMUNISTS HAVE IMPROVED THEIR MILITARY POSITION RELATIVE TO THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT

SINCE THE CEASEFIRE; BUT I BELIEVE THE OVERALL MILITARY

BALANCE REMAINS IN THE GOVERNMENT'S FAVOR.

QUESTION FIVE: DO YOU FEEL ANY PERSONAL DISAPPOINTMENT THAT THE PEACE HAS NOT WORKED AS WELL AS IT MIGHT?

SUGGESTED DRAFT RESPONSE: OF COURSE I BELIEVE THAT ALL OF US WHO HAVE SPENT A NUMBER OF YEARS OF OUR LIVES AND A GREAT DEAL OF EFFORT TOWARD BRINGING THIS MOST DIFFICULT OF WARS TO AN HONORABLE END ARE SOMEWHAT DISAPPOINTED THAT PEACE HAS NOT COME ABOUT THIS PAST YEAR, BUT AS I HAVE SAID BEFORE, THE GROUNDWORK HAS BEEN LAID, THE VIOLENCE HAS BEEN REDUCED, AND THE APPARATUS FOR ATTAINING OUR ULTIMATE OBJECTIVE IS STILL FUNCTIONING. THESE THINGS GIVE US JUST REASON TO BE HOPEFUL THAT EVENTUALLY, A SOUND AND HONORABLE PEACE WILL COME ABOUT.

QUESTION SIX: MILITARILY, WHAT DO YOU THINK WILL HAPPEN IN VIETNAM IN 1974?

SUGGESTED DRAFT RESPONSE: MOST INTELLIGENCE ANALYSTS NOW APPEAR TO BELIEVE THE ODDS ARE SOMEWHAT LESS THAN EVEN THAT THE NORTH VIETNAMESE WILL UNDERTAKE A MAJOR OFFENSIVE THIS DRY SEASON (I.E., BEFORE JUNE 1974) TO ACHIEVE THEIR UNCHANGED GOAL OF ATTAINING POLITICAL POWER IN THE SOUTH. IF THE COMMUNISTS DO NOT ATTACK DURING THAT PERIOD, THEY MAY WELL DO SO A YEAR LATER. I BELIEVE THE OFFENSIVE
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COULD TAKE TWO FORMS:

--MASSIVE, COORDINATED ASSAULTS ON ALL FRONTS, AS IN 1972;
OR

--A CREEPING OFFENSIVE, WITH GRADUALLY INCREASED PRESSURE ON WEAK SPOTS IN SOUTH VIETNAMESE DEFENSES, CULMINATING IN LARGE-SCALE ASSAULTS AGAINST MAJOR TARGETS. THIS OPTION COULD BE THE MORE LIKELY BECAUSE IT WOULD OBSCURE THE QUESTION OF WHO IS TO BLAME FOR THE RENEWED FIGHTING AND MAKE A POTENTIAL US DECISION TO INTERVENE FAR MORE DIFFICULT. IN FACT, WE COULD PERHAPS BE SEEING THE BEGINNING STAGE OF SUCH AN OFFENSIVE NOW.

I DO NOT WANT TO PREDICT THE OUTCOME OF ANY SUCH OFFENSIVE. BUT I AM VERY IMPRESSED AT THE TENACIOUS WAY IN

WHICH THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE FOUGHT AGAINST THE COMMUNISTS IN 1972.

WHETHER THERE IS ULTIMATE PEACE IN INDOCHINA WILL DEPEND IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS ON THE THREE MAJOR POWERS -- THE U.S., THE SOVIET UNION AND CHINA. WHILE

I BELIEVE THAT SOUTH VIETNAM WILL DEFEND ITSELF AGAINST FUTURE ARMED ATTACKS BY NORTH VIETNAM, AND AGAINST SUBVERSION, CLEARLY IT CANNOT DO SO IF WE WITHDRAW OUR ASSISTANCE AND RUSSIA AND CHINA CONTINUE TO GIVE MILITARY AND ECONOMIC AID TO HANOI. THE HOPE, THEREFORE, IS THAT BOTH THE SOVIETS AND CHINESE HAVE LARGER INTERESTS THEY WISH TO PURSUE WITH US -- INTERESTS THAT GO BEYOND THE PROBLEM OF INDOCHINA -- AND THAT TOGETHER WITH THEM WE SHALL BE ABLE TO EXERCISE ON BOTH SIDES THE RESTRAINT NECESSARY TO INDUCE THEM TO CONTINUE THE STRUGGLE IN POLITICAL TERMS.

AS LONG AS THE GREAT POWERS CONTINUE TO EXERCISE THE RESTRAINT THEY HAVE SHOWN THUS FAR IN THE CEASEFIRE PERIOD, I BELIEVE THE OUTLOOK IS FOR CONTINUATION OF THE CURRENT NO-WAR, NO-PEACE SITUATION, WITH THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT MAINTAINING ITS POSITION OF RELATIVE STRENGTH.

2. IF YOU WISH TO RESPOND TO THESE QUESTIONS FOR PUBLI-
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CATION PLEASE RETURN ANSWERS TO ME AND I WILL PASS THEM TO THE WASHINGTON BUREAU OF THE KANSAS CITY STAR. KISSINGER

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